



# On Stream

Newsletter of the Selkirk College Faculty Association

October 2008

## Ponderings from the President

As many of you have heard, changes are coming to the Castlegar campus bookstore. What those changes are and what impact they will have has not been made official, and rumours have been flying for weeks. What we do know is that the position of bookstore manager will not be filled upon Jill Jacques' retirement after 30 years of service.

In response to these rumours, and those about WKTEP, the staff lounge in Castlegar, and poor results from the Mercer survey, Marilyn Luscombe has promised better communications to staff about future changes.

The SCFA's position is that any reduction of service at the bookstore is unacceptable. We made this clear to Marilyn in meetings at the beginning of the year. The bookstore has been a consistent money-maker for the school, and in times of reducing budgets, it seems ludicrous to down-size a profitable enterprise. Management seems convinced they can squeeze more profit out of the bookstore by reducing the service it provides.

While attending university, I spent countless free hours at the campus bookstores (as I'm sure many of you did as well). The thought of a campus without a bookstore, or with a bookstore offering the bare minimum or service is unimaginable. Rest assured that the SCFA is determined to keep the bookstore open.

**Doug Henderson**

## Updates and Uptakes

Our phones have been ringing a lot lately. Seems people want to know "what is going on?" In response to your frequently asked questions, here is what we know:

### Budget Woes

What we know is that no one knows. Except maybe Gordon Campbell and he's not telling.

You may remember that the Ministry of Advanced Education gave each of the colleges a Letter of Expectations that they are required to sign. If you couldn't make sense of the letter, don't worry, neither could the College or the Board of Governors. Well, maybe that is worrisome. At this time, the Board has not signed the letter while they await clarification. What we do know is that the letter sets FTE targets that are impossible for Selkirk to meet. We achieve between 90-95%. (Someone should tell the Premier that's an "A".) However, we do meet the targets in all of the government's prioritized areas.

The College has submitted to the Ministry a three-year plan to deal with the deficit and budget cuts announced in the spring. The Ministry has not responded so the College is proceeding with their plan until they hear otherwise. Since legally colleges are not allowed to run a deficit, no news is, well, not good or bad; it's just no news. The bad news is that we can expect a "phase two." That means possible layoffs and losses.

### **The West Kootenay Teacher Education Program**

Selkirk was informed by the Ministry that it could not cut the WKTEP program as a means of dealing with the deficit so it is still up and running. This is good news for teachers in our area but bad news for the College's bottom line. Despite a discount of \$100,000 in operating costs, the program still costs a lot of money – we're talking six figures-- and it still does not allow the College to count the FTEs. The College is reviewing its relationship with UBC and looking for a better plan.

### **The Human Rights Advisor Position**

This is the position (with many different names) that Liana Zwick held for years before she moved into Human Resources. Staff and students relied on her expertise in an incredible variety of situations especially those dealing with discrimination, harassment and complaints. The position has been vacant for a few years and now we have been informed it will not be filled. Marilyn has promised to share with us the reasons why. When we know, we'll let you know. (See page three for the letter penned by our SCFA reps on the President's Advisory Council.)

### **The Faculty Lounge**

Change has already happened. The lounge is undergoing extensive renovations to make it suitable for large functions. The College plans to generate revenue by catering events for outside organizations. The money for the renovations comes from a separate pot of money, money that apparently cannot be used to offset the budget deficit. Maintenance tells us they are working towards on opening date of October 17.

### **The Employee Engagement Survey and Task Force Committees.**

Okay this one takes longer to explain.

### **The Survey**

Last spring, many of you—57% in fact—participated in the Employee Engagement Survey

conducted by Mercer LLC. This survey was sent to a consortium of colleges in BC. You can review the results of the survey across BC, for Selkirk College only, and for each employee group. These results are posted at <https://internal.selkirk.ca/login/index.php> and filed under HR Reports.

By the way, 57% is considered to be a high response rate. Very briefly, results show that faculty and staff at Selkirk are highly motivated to provide the best services to students, we like the people we work with and we get a feeling of accomplishment from our jobs. We also feel very well informed about our benefits. This is good.

However, we are not so happy with how promotions are awarded; we do not feel performance evaluations adequately distinguish among poor, fair and good performers; we do not feel senior leadership understands the problems that we face, nor do they confront issues before they become major problems. This is not so good.

Of course much work is still needed to determine how to interpret these scores. The wording of some questions is ambiguous when applied to a post-secondary setting.

### **The Task Force Committees**

The scores were deemed worrisome enough to warrant action. To this end, Marilyn has struck three task force committees. Each committee corresponds to two sections of the survey.

The three task forces areas are:

1. Employee Development (includes performance appraisal)
2. Communications (includes teamwork and cooperation)
3. Leadership (includes management and missions and values).

Each task force is starting with one representative from each employee group (SCFA, BCGEU, PPWC and Exempt) and one from Senior Management. So each task force has five initial members.

The management person is not the chair or facilitator. It will be up to each group to decide how they want to divide up duties, roles, etc.

Your SCFA representatives are Doug Henderson, Employee Development; Tracy Punchard, Communications; Judy Forsyth, Leadership.

Marilyn has sent out the call to all employees asking for members at large to join the task force committees and to email her to express your interest by **Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

The list of names will then be given to each of the relevant committees. The five members of each group will select four members at large with the priority being one member from each of the four employee groups. However, if, for example, no one from the SCFA wants to be on a task force, that group can then select two members from another group. So, equal representation is the goal where possible. Each committee will have a total of nine members. Release time, travel expenses, etc. will be available for members to attend meetings. The President is requesting that reports be submitted by December.

Okay, you probably have more questions now than before. That's okay, because if our phones totally stopped ringing, we'd be worried and would start wondering "what is going on?"

**Tracy Punchard**

## **Do you need help with a human rights issue? Then call . . .**

**Below is the letter sent by SCFA representatives on the President's Advisory Council. The letter was sent March 18. To date, no reply has been received.**

Dear Marilyn,

Proceeding from our discussions in the President's Advisory Committee on Human Rights (PACHR) meeting of Wednesday 12 March 2008, we encourage you to restore and renew the Human Rights policy, procedure and programs at Selkirk College. In particular, the position of a full-time Human Rights Education Consultant must be reinstated, and the outreach and educational components of the policy must be reactivated. It is critical that the position remain neutral, independent and unaffiliated with any employee group, and that the individual in the position be able to maintain currency in this important and developing field, as well as networking provincially, nationally and beyond on our behalf.

In the past several years since the position has been reduced to half-time then left vacant, many costly issues that would have been effectively addressed under our policy have escalated instead. In addition, there has been a significant, observable deterioration in the way that people treat one another within our college community.

The history of the development and implementation of our Human Rights policy is one of inspirational collaboration, commitment and hard work by all sectors. Despite the hiatus of the past several years, we strongly believe that this policy still has the potential to contribute significantly to a positive college environment and to our mission of "Empowered, effective citizens".

Last and certainly least, just a note that it was very disappointing and disheartening to be presented with an unfortunate decision about human rights at Selkirk College in which we, as long-time members of your advisory committee, have had no opportunity to participate. We remain ready and willing to work with you to complete the review of the Human Rights policy and to select a new Human Rights Education Consultant to help us revive the human rights agenda at Selkirk College.

**Mark your calendar!**

**The SCFA General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 21<sup>st</sup> in Castlegar. Details coming soon.**

## **Our President's Report on the FPSE AGM**

I attended the FPSE AGM in Whistler in mid-May and was able to talk to many of our colleagues from other colleges and universities around the province about the cut-backs that have affected all of us. Every college was forced to issue lay-offs, and many, like Selkirk, cancelled entire programmes.

The keynote speaker at the AGM was Dr. Andrew Weaver of the University of Victoria, an expert on climate change. He gave a fascinating talk on the speed of global warming and the effects it will have on our planet. He explained that some global warming is inevitable, given the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere. If we don't first drastically reduce, and within 50 years eliminate, these emissions, the results will be catastrophic.

I was also chosen to facilitate a workshop on the effects of greenhouse gases (GHGs) as well as

carbon offsets. Since the provincial government wants all provincial institutions to be carbon neutral with a few years, this topic had direct relevance to Selkirk. The first half of the workshop dealt with the different types of GHGs, their relative impact, and their sources. We learned that one tonne of certain gases produced in industrial settings have the same effect on global warming as tens of thousands of tones of carbon dioxide. The second half of the session dealt with carbon offsets. Becoming carbon neutral is currently impossible for many companies, so to achieve this goal, many pay other companies to reduce the GHG emissions. We also looked at the sources of a typical college's GHGs and realized how difficult it will be to reduce them.

The rest of the AGM dealt with resolutions that were debated and voted upon. This upcoming year, there will be more pressure put on the provincial government to save the university transfer system, while continuing to pressure the government to restore proper funding levels to the college system. We are also planning the preliminary steps for the next bargaining round, and a special bargaining planning session will be held this fall.

**Doug Henderson**

## **AGM Workshops**

If you are still wondering what happens at AGM, here is a run down of some of the workshops. We can only guess what kind of variety will be offered next year!

### **Member to Member Conflict**

This workshop helped members identify the different types of conflict that may occur in their workplaces, the impact such conflict has on individuals and on groups, and the steps needed to develop best practices. An overview of policy alternatives that have been developed by other

workers and employer organizations were provided.

**Post-Retirement Group Benefits provided Through the College Pension Plan: The Challenges and Issues**

This workshop gave members a basic understanding of post-retirement group benefits (extended health and dental plans), the financial arrangements supporting those benefits, and the management challenges they pose for the College Board of Trustees.

**Violence in the Workplace**

This workshop focused on issues of violence in the work place and working alone. We had the opportunity to analyze each participant’s own workplace in terms of safety and then develop a work safety plan based on what we had learned.

**Condition Critical: University Transfer Programs in BC**

Many UT programs have seen enrollment declines over the last seven years. This workshop examined some of the trends in enrollment and assessed some of the factors influencing those trends. Policy options that could help strengthen these programs were also discussed.

**Canadian Labour Congress Women’s Economic Equality Campaign: Equality Once And For All!**

This workshop looked at the current situation and growing wage gap between men and women in Canada. It does not seem to matter what you do or where you live, as a woman you are still likely to earn on average 70.5 cents for every dollar earned by men for full - time full-year jobs.

**Asbestos-Workplace Hazard and Global Health Menace**

This workshop focused on what asbestos is, how it is a hazard-both inside and outside of the workplace, why it endangers our health, and how

we can prevent future exposures through effective community prevention models and political action. Highlighted were: regulations and required asbestos management plans, worker training and right to know as well as employer obligations.

**An Introduction To Web 2.0 and Social Media**

Web –based mechanisms are being increasingly relied upon for engaging both our students and our members. This workshop discussed the implications of Web2.0 and how we can use it to improve member outreach and teaching strategies.

**Defining Issues in Federal Politics**

All federal parties are gearing up for a federal election that must take place by October 2009. How the parties will deal with economic differences between the regions was discussed.

This workshop examined what policies Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats and the Bloc can be expected to present and what issues will define their differences.

**Sally Glock**

**Your SCFA Executive**

**President:** Doug Henderson

**VP Contract Administration:** Lui Marinelli

**VP Liaison:** Tracy Punchard

**VP Negotiations:** Lori Barkley

**Secretary:** Bev Onischak

**Treasurer:** John Stegman

**College Board Observer:** Victor Villa

**Retirement Issues Officer:** Duff Sutherland